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SUBJECT: Zagreb Daily Report - December 24, 2009

11. (U) Poll Suggests Bandic Enjoys Solid Lead in Diaspora Vote: Croatia's NovaTV, utilizing an unknown Bosnian polling agency of uncertain reliability, announced one of the only poll results conducted for the Croatian diaspora residing in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H). The poll indicates that Milan Bandic is likely to receive around 47 percent of the diaspora vote from B-H, while Andrija Hebrang will have about about 15 percent and Dragan Primorac 14.6 percent. The leading candidate in Croatia-proper, Ivo Josipovic, received support from only 6.4 percent of those polled. Other candidates such as Miroslav Tudjman, son of Croatia's first president, received 2.8 percent, Nadan Vidosevic 2.7 percent, and Vesna Pusic 1.7 percent. The OSCE Limited Election Observation Mission noted that as of December 1 there were approximately 268,000 Croatian citizens residing in B-H who are registered to vote in Croatian elections. However, the actual number of voters is probably less, as voter registration counts in Bosnia and Herzegovina have recently been updated.

Mesic Comments on Attempt to Make Last Minute Military Appointments: In an interview published on December 24, President Mesic commented on recent stories in the press about appointing General Darko Grdic, the current head of the Military Intelligence Agency (VSOA), as the new Chief of the General Staff and appointing Grdic's current deputy, General Ogjen Preost to replace him as VSOA Director. When asked why Mesic wanted to appoint Grdic and Preost at the end of his mandate, Mesic stated that: "it is important to continue the reform of the armed forces, and because it is important that people who know their job continue that business." Mesic believed that both generals were qualified since "they have the knowledge and the experience," and they had played an important role in the reforms that the Croatian Armed Forces undertook to meet the requirements to join NATO. Mesic denied that he was trying to maintain some control over the military after he left office in February. PM Kosor has yet to comment publicly on these proposed appointments.

WALKER